

A

PROBATIONARY
SURGICAL ESSAY

ON

CANCER,

SUBMITTED,

BY AUTHORITY OF

THE PRESIDENT AND HIS COUNCIL,

TO THE EXAMINATION OF THE

Royal College of Surgeons

OF EDINBURGH,

WHEN CANDIDATE

FOR ADMISSION INTO THEIR CORPORATION,

IN CONFORMITY

TO THEIR REGULATIONS RESPECTING THE ADMISSION

OF

ORDINARY MEMBERS.

BY

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JUNE 1818.

EDINBURGH:

PRINTED BY ALEX. LAWRIE & CO.

1818.

TO

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SENIOR FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS,

AND

JOHN GORDON, M.D.

F. R. S. E. &c. &c.

THIS ESSAY

IS DEDICATED,

AS A MARK OF RESPECT

AND GRATITUDE.

ON

CANCER.

THE human body, as viewed in the general, may be said to be made up of muscle, bone, visible arterial trunk, and the other common textures ; but its composition, when a little farther considered, is by no means so simple ; for these, we are to remember, are in their turn made up of blood-vessels, capable, perhaps, of producing *ad infinitum* others with powers similar to their own, every part of the body, with scarce an exception, having, in the natural state, the means of renewing portions of itself, by the operations, whether chemical or mechanical, of its minute arteries and lymphatics.

Reflections on this subject must convince every one, that the fabric of animal bodies is an extremely complex one, and having parts entering into its composition, the immediate nature of

whose mode of action no one can exactly comprehend.

That such a system should continue invariable, without disturbance in its functions, would indeed be extraordinary, and might in this case give much more room for the speculations of the curious, than that it should occasionally become generally or locally deranged. Such derangements, however, as might be expected, are numerous, and it is to the consideration of one of these, called Cancer, that the following Essay is to be directed.

A disease so prominent in its symptoms, and so hostile to the peace and comfort of those afflicted with it as Cancer, could not long fail of attracting the attention of those engaged in medical pursuits: Accordingly, as far back as the period at which Galen wrote, correct enough notions of the nature of the disease seem to have been entertained. In his book of Definitions, we have in the two *Quid Scirrhus?* and *Quid Carcinoma?* * satisfactory evidence of his full acquaintance with the disease: indeed, the Greek word *βαρεῖς* in the first of these, is no small proof of the talent for observation in those days, since we still find in the books of our modern surgeons

* Galen. Definit. 385, 393.

heaviness * mentioned as a distinguishing symptom of the complaint.

Different definitions of the disease have since this time been attempted; and though, in the present day, our stock of knowledge in regard to this, as well as many other surgical diseases, is, of course, much augmented, yet the obtaining of a correct definition, suited to every variety, is what, for the present at least, we can only contemplate as a difficulty, not speedily to be surmounted.†

Cancer so generally forms itself into two stages, the first called *Scirrhus*, and the second *Open Cancer*, that such an arrangement in the description of its appearances seems, upon the whole, best adapted for surgical disquisition. It is, therefore, proposed, in the first instance, to offer a few remarks on *Scirrhus*.

SCIRRHUS.

WITHOUT attempting any thing like a faultless description, which would apply in every in-

* Observations on Cancer by Sir E. Home, p. 156.

† Dictionarie des Sciences Medicales, vol. iii, p. 540.

stance of the disease, it may be said that it consists in a more or less irregular, often painful, induration of the part affected, which may be attended either with an augmentation, or an appearance of shrinking in its natural dimensions: it communicates to the fingers of the examiner the feelings of firmness and inelasticity; and, when near a bone, frequently seems even more bound down to what is below, than at the subsequent operation is found really to be the case. An enlargement of the cutaneous veins is also frequently present in Scirrhus.

A blow sometimes seems to produce these diseased actions, though as often the complaint arises without the individual being able to trace it to any external accident whatever. In such cases, however, we can usually discover other appearances of general bad health in the person of the patient, apart from the disease which is the more immediate object of our attention.

When on the external parts of the body, it usually begins with a pimple, a wart, a stiffness in the integuments, or, as in a case under my own notice, with an appearance of a scurvy spot, in the vulgar acceptation of the word, which, being irritated, assume more unfavourable aspects as the disease advances. When in an internal part,

the formation of the disease is usually announced by an uneasiness which, sooner or later, calls the attention of the sufferer.

There seems to be no organ or texture of the human body to which, in the course of the disease, Cancer may not extend; but at the outset of the complaint it will be found, for the most part, that Scirrhus does not commence primarily, except in secreting glands, mucous membranes, skin, and cellular substance. As to the lymphatic glands, it is well known to every one how readily they become affected by contamination, as it is called; but there seem to be few well attested instances on record of the disease beginning in an absorbent gland.

I have in my own limited observation, on one occasion, seen a gland in the neighbourhood of the breast so obstinately affected,* as to be judged a fit subject for operation by those in attendance, when the breast itself was to appearance sound; but still this might not have been genuine Scirrhus; it might not have arisen in the gland, and might have yielded to a farther perse-

* That a transient affection of this nature sometimes occurs, frequently yielding to suitable treatment, is now well known. Home, p. 155.

verance in ordinary measures : I cannot say particularly as to the internal state of this tumour.

The opinion, indeed, of Mr. Pearson on this subject has been at one time, at least, quite decided. “ I never yet (says he) met with an unequivocal proof of a primary Scirrhus in an absorbent gland.”* Some cases have, however, more lately occurred,† which are rather in favour of the opposite opinion ; and it is not unlikely several others might be added, were the attention of practitioners more generally called to this subject. Mr. Pearson is also of opinion, that of the first-mentioned parts, the secreting glands, it is those separating fluids, to be afterwards employed in the animal economy, which more frequently suffer.

Tumours of this description have been seen on the inside of the peritoneum‡ ; but (though the contrary is not stated) are not mentioned so decidedly as having their first beginning here, as to warrant the placing serous membranes among the primary seats of Scirrhus.

When a Scirrhus is cut into, in whatever organ

* Practical Observations on Cancerous Complaints, by J. Pearson, p. 5.

† Wardrop on Fungus Hæmatodes, p. 188, Note.

‡ Baillie's Morbid Anatomy, 3d edition, p. 131.

or texture it is situated, more or less of the peculiar appearances which characterize the disease are to be perceived. These, when well marked, consist in the now frequently described structure of a peculiar greyish yellow substance, intersected by ligamentous bands of a firmer nature, and often in a radiated direction. “There is, indeed, “no other striking circumstance which can be “mentioned, as constantly claiming attention in “the structure of this disease ;” * and when this is wanting, we cannot, in strict propriety, call the disease cancerous ; which, however, has hitherto, there is much reason to fear, too often been done.

The pain attending this stage of Cancer varies, the patient sometimes complaining from the first, when few of the external characters of the disease are formed, and it is as it were *in limine* ; at other times the disorder makes considerable progress, without the corresponding feelings of uneasiness in the part.

We have the disease more frequent in the breast, the testicle ?, the womb, the stomach, and some other organs or textures, modified in its appearances, according to the situation in which it

* Abernethy's Classification, p. 78.

may happen to be placed. In no two parts, probably, is the disease exactly alike, though similar on the whole. And it is also to be remembered, in regard to cancerous structure in any particular organ or texture, that differences may arise from our finding it as having begun in that part, or only as existing in it by propagation, from an origin in some other.

At what period of the complaint are we to expect to find an interruption in the functions of a secreting gland affected with Scirrhus?

Patients have expired under the wasting effects of mere Scirrhus; but the constitution generally holds out in this stage of the disease, which, if left to itself, proceeds to the next, and is now in its turn to be considered.

OPEN CANCER.

AFTER the last-mentioned symptoms have existed for a certain time, the external appearances of the disease change a little; the common integuments of the surface begin to assume a darker than natural colour over the part; or if the membrane lining a cavity, as of the mouth, is concerned, a fretting takes place; and, in either case,

we have a solution of continuity in the part, accompanied by the formation of a foetid matter, constituting in all an ill-conditioned and untractable ulcer. If it has its seat in an internal part of the body, we should at this time expect an increase of uneasiness in the part affected.

The disease is at times even now very tardy in its progress, particularly when scabbing of the surface takes place ; and there have been instances of individuals thus affected living to old age. At this period, however, it generally proceeds more rapidly in its destructive course, advancing in two ways, both by a method similar to absorption, and by directly spreading into parts in the immediate neighbourhood, though its sensible progress by the former of these ways is fully as evidently marked in the Scirrhus stage of the disorder.

Any texture of the body whatever may be attacked by Cancer in this advanced state, though it will affect some more readily than others : It is no unfrequent occurrence to see portions of the bone destroyed under the ravages of this afflicting malady. A case lately occurred in the Royal Infirmary of this place, in which a considerable portion of both tables of the skull had been re-

moved in the form of a large hole, by an affection of this sort.

“ But besides this local alteration to which
 “ the bones are subject, it is asserted that the
 “ whole skeleton may participate in the general
 “ influence of the disease.”* That this texture, indeed, seems in itself fully capable of propagating the disease, is proved by practitioners having frequently dissected out entirely to appearance, the cancerous parts covering a bone in this state, under the expectation that it might in part exfoliate, and, in course of time, become covered with healthy granulations. But the complaint has been found to return, and it is imagined will be seen, with very few exceptions, spreading anew into the neighbouring soft parts.

A curious enough circumstance, sometimes observed in this advanced stage of Cancer, to which probably Mr. Cooper, in the sentence just quoted from a different part of his work, alludes, is a remarkable brittleness of the bones, attendant on the disorder.†

Sloughs, and considerable masses of their sur-

* Cooper's First Lines, p. 157.

† The above-cited elementary work, p. 238, under the article, *Fragillitas Ossium*.

face, are sometimes thrown off from cancerous ulcers, and we often have to combat extensive bleedings from its diseased vessels. “The mil-
 “ary eruption which spreads on the skin like
 “herpes,” has been seen as an attendant on the ichorous discharge from a Cancer, and an erysipelatous redness also frequently accompanies the former cutaneous appearance.

Though at this time there is generally a loss of substance on the whole, yet at various times fungi, or studs of new-formed substance protrude, and exhibit their jagged irritable surfaces, with much increase of suffering to the patient.

The boundary of an inveterate Cancer, of considerable duration, is occasionally of small extent, though, of course, still on the increase; but, more generally, a considerable portion of substance is converted into a mass, differing almost in every respect from these parts in their state of original formation. Dissections of the disease shew, that sometimes matter is formed in the substance of a Cancer, before the external sore has been produced; at other times this is of after formation.* The disease also has been seen complicated with the formation of a watery cist,

* Home, p. 158, *et sequent.*; and Wardrop, p. 184.

or hydatids in the tumour ; but this, of course, is not looked upon as at all an essential part of the complaint.*

It is not meant to be said, as has been already hinted, that this, which has been usually called the second stage of Cancer, is on every occasion necessarily preceded by the other : untractable malignant ulcers, which in their progress have assumed many, or all the characters of Cancer, and are apt indeed to receive the name, have no doubt been seen suddenly, and without preparation as it were, breaking out in some parts of the body, and in some textures perhaps more particularly than others ; but even in these instances it is probable, had our attention been early enough called to the appearances, some hardening, some antecedent local derangement of the nature of Scirrhus, might have been observed.

On the other hand, it has been alleged, that a hardening sometimes succeeds the superficial ulceration.†

So dreadful a disease as an ulcerated Cancer cannot, in general, long exist, without shewing

* See also Howard, p. 37, on this subject, and the existence of insects, or animalcules in sores.

† Abernethy, p. 80.

powerfully its baneful effects on the body at large, Accordingly, the violent irritation, the pain and want of sleep attendant thereon, the frequent occurrence of asthmatic affection, constitute or produce a train of symptoms of hectic and exhaustion, which end fatally, sooner or latter, in different individuals.

MR. HOWARD has proposed a distinction of Cancer into external and internal, with reference to the surface of the body, observing, however, that he considers the * specific character the same in both. He says, the latter are, in general, more quick in their progress, which, however, is nothing more than we should *a priori* expect from the tension and weight of the parts above exciting the action of the absorbents, and other vessels of the part, by their increased pressure on parts more deeply seated. From this, again, it may be said, that there are "chronic, as well as acute Cancers," between the extremes of which, however, there is every intermediate variety, from appearances resem-

* Howard, p. 29.

bling the slow-spreading *noli me tangere* of the face, to instances in which the disease is seen advancing with the utmost rapidity.

An able writer on Surgery* has combated the idea of a Scirrhus being inflammatory; but, be this as it may, it is to the doctrines of inflammation, whether as a cause or as an effect and accompanying symptom, we are to look for these differences in the progress of cancerous affections: For in many instances it will be found, that in proportion as the part has a greater or less degree of inflammatory tendency, as the patient is kept quiet, or allowed to follow the bent of inclination as to the use of strong food and liquors, in proportion in short, as we use or neglect the employment of antiphlogistic means, is the disease kept stationary for a time, or seen advancing with greater quickness.

There can be little doubt that it is in this way in a great measure, that the cancerous regimen becomes occasionally so useful in those cases of Cancer, if such they were, in which it has been tried. And, in addition, a Cancer being no part of the original structure of the body, may be said to be a new-formed part, and seems

* Pearson, p. 10, 11.

from its lesser powers, to use the language of Mr. Hunter, in some degree to die out, or subside in a manner, under a support barely sufficient for the nourishment and existence of the rest of the body. *

Much has been said about cancerous constitution, cancerous diathesis, a cancerous virus existing in the body. That we may occasionally observe a disposition to the formation of Cancer

* With respect to this subject it may be observed, that we may certainly seek to avert the approach of the disease, on the occurrence of a blow on some parts of the body, in unhealthy constitutions, particularly at certain periods of life, which experience has proved more liable to the disease, by confinement to a low abstemious diet ; and it is our duty, even in some instances, to attempt to retard the disease when fully formed, by a farther pursuance of these means ; but whether we are to view Dr. Lamb's opinions on this subject as perfectly just, and the facts he has adduced in support of them as quite conclusive, or that he is in some degree under the influence of enthusiasm, in the present state of society they are so completely at variance with received opinions and established customs, that he can scarcely ever expect to see them realised. Some of his speculations or experiments, indeed, on the use of distilled in place of common water, are extraordinary enough ; but, after all, the notion of a vegetable diet, I do not say alone, but aided by an operation in desperate cases of Cancer, is by no means new. (Chesselden, p. 140). From a clause placed within parenthesis, which has often struck me when thinking of the subject, he seems also to have had an idea of the singular utility, on other occasions, of purgative medicines, to which our attention has been more particularly called in later times, in the excellent publication of Dr. Hamilton. Chesselden, p. 208 of 12 edit. of Anatomy.

in various parts of the body of the same individual at once, is a thing which none will seek to dispute ; but the existence of a peculiar poison circulating in the body, is a subject of much greater difficulty.

It has been alleged that the disease spreads in the body by a diffusion of a particular material poison ; but a due consideration of cases of *apparent* metastasis * render this opinion extremely improbable. Why should a poison leave one place to go to another and even though we are told, as has been said of the venereal, that losing its power of affecting in one part, it still retains it over another ; yet it is extremely curious, that it should be transferred to that at some distance, and take effect there, without injuring parts in its way, which experience proves equally susceptible of the disease. We occasionally see disease of an absorbent gland apparently out of the course which absorbed fluids would take,† though this is by no means common ; and at other times we may observe glands different from the absorbent, as the parotid and submax-

* Home, p. 77 ; Howard, p. 94 ; Edin. Med. Essays, vol. v, part 1, p. 421.

† Abernethy's Classification of Humours, p. 74, 75, and 76.

iliary in Cancer of the lip, tongue, or mouth, affected with Cancer.* Because we observe Cancer affecting the nearest absorbent gland earlier than some of the parts in which it is immediately imbedded, there is no reason for supposing it to have a poison peculiar to itself, when we find the absorbing system, the means of propagation of the irritating medium, produced in the matter of a common sore. It is possible to conceive that ordinary matter put into an absorbent vessel might irritate, and occasion such derangement as would ultimately lead to the production of cancerous affection in the nearest absorbent gland, in an individual whose body was highly predisposed to the disease.

Hitherto what I have said on this subject regards rather the poison as confined to the body of an individual already affected with the disease. "That cancerous matter when applied to an abraded surface," should be able to communicate the disease to a healthy person, is not very likely, when we consider the perfect impunity, with which surgeons extirpate cancerous parts, notwithstanding the frequent existence of those little excoriations called rag-nails, and scratches,

* Pearson, p. 55.

or chaps, which they may have on their hands and fingers, during the performance of operations for the removal of these, as well as of other tumours. Indeed, to carry the argument a little farther, and even putting out of consideration the time allowed for the supposed absorption, it is difficult to conceive that the wound made in excision should ever heal, if we acknowledge the existence of a poison here, which must of necessity be diffused over the surface of the wound, by the blood, and handling of the part. How often would ordinary cases be made Cancers in hospitals, by the promiscuous use of vessels and surgical instruments amongst the patients ?*

With all this, however, there are some singu-

* It is hoped the following may not be deemed altogether out of place.—When we know how readily a very small quantity of venereal matter produces chancre, and see how these spread on a continuous surface, it is a very extraordinary circumstance how long the glans penis, affected with chancre in a particular spot, will sometimes remain covered by its prepuce, without communicating to it the disease, and *vice versa* ; one of these parts frequently not ulcerating by contact, unless the disease spreads by continuous ulceration, *e. g.* a chancre near the corona, in many instances, does not occasion ulceration of the portion of the prepuce covering it, unless it first spread back behind the corona, and then forward on the inside of the prepuce.

lar enough facts, or, at least, narratives, if we can put confidence in them, on the records of the disease, regarding exhalations from cancerous sores, a seeming contagious influence, and the effects which appear to have been produced by the matter on the tongues of some individuals who had ventured to taste it.*

The disease of Cancer has been seen connected with elephantiasis and lepra, with scrophula frequently ; and it has been said,—“ It may be
 “ proved from the records of the disease, that al-
 “ most all the great and incurable diseases, as
 “ mania, epilepsy, spasms, and contractions of
 “ the limbs, dropsical swellings, asthmatic breath-
 “ ings, and consumption, have been connected
 “ with Cancer, either as alternating with it, be-
 “ ing concomitant, or immediately succeeding
 “ it.”† Many of these diseases are hereditary ;
 and if we are to receive the above in its fullest
 extent, we cannot but view Cancer as connected
 with the constitution in a much more complex
 light than is usually done, and as an extremely
 interesting subject in pathology, though an ob-

* See Dict. des Sciences Med. p. 675, 676, and Pearson, p. 20, *et sequent*.

† Reports on Cancer by William Lambe, p. 185.

scure one. Any habit of body may assume at particular times certain diseased actions; but some only have a tendency to continue these when once begun, which seems eminently the case in the cancerous.

Those favouring the notion of the hereditary nature of Cancer, or who consider it as nearly connected with diseases which have of late been attempted to be distinguished from it, might look upon it as something more than mere coincidence, that the mother of a patient at present in the Infirmary, with a very large malignant tumour of the medullary sort, died of a Cancer of the breast.

The disease has been said to be more frequently found in females than in males; or, rather, certain organs of the female, not existing in men, are particularly liable to the complaint.

It is rather confined, upon the whole, to the adult and the advanced periods of life; ulcerating diseases beginning with a Scirrhus structure having been rarely or ever seen in infancy or childhood.

Venereal sores, according to opinions till now

entertained, may be cured by a specific applied through the medium of the constitution, strumous affections, frequently by bettering the general habit of the body, and ordinary ulcers of different descriptions, by changing their diseased actions, in general by local applications, with the occasional aid of internal medicines. But it is not so with Cancer. A change of structure here is not to be looked for; and its cure can only be accomplished, and it is to be wished it were without fail,* by removing every portion of the disease from the body, by a free use of the knife, occasionally by the ligature, or, in some few instances,† by the application of strong caustics, which can only produce their effects by acting in the same way.

There is, with much reason, a great difference of opinion among men of judgment, as to the propriety of removing enlarged and hardened glands. It is not the invariable consequence,

* There is a very discouraging case, Howard, p. 76.

† Mr. Home is for the most part adverse to the use of caustic applications to Cancers, since, if they do not entirely erode the disease, they certainly irritate, and may do harm. When the cautic is to be used, however, that of arsenic and sulphur, equal parts, is the one to be employed with the most advantage. Home, p. 182 *et seq.*

that the disease is reproduced in glands which had been enlarged. We have instances of their subsiding* entirely, after the removal of very distressing diseases, by excision, whether these were truly of the cancerous nature or not; and we cannot bear in mind too much, the possibility in a real Cancer, of their enlargement depending merely on irritation, which will cease when the disease is removed. † The bad consequences, and swelling of the arm also, frequently following the removal of these, when in the arm-pit, cannot be too strongly insisted on. Besides, while only one gland may discover itself externally to the fingers, yet after the skin is divided, and this removed, others are often found extending, one after another, so deeply as to be beyond reach.

We have just seen, that every hardening or enlargement of glands is not reproductive of the disease. What is the state of structure, then, in such hardened glands as will inevitably be found to reproduce the disease, and form a sufficient leaven for its recurrence? ‡

Occasionally the removal of the part is, from its

* Abernethy, p. 39, 40.

† Howard, p. 33, 63, 64.

‡ Baillie, p. 109.

situation, or from some other circumstance, impracticable, in which case surgical aid can only mitigate what cannot be cured. With this view, the administration of opiates is extremely useful; and various local remedies of the narcotic tribe, applied along with the carrot poultice, and other fomentations, are the ordinary means adopted by practitioners. It has been well observed in Surgery, that a part will not go on healing under any one application, or under any one mode of treatment, above a certain time; and here, where temporary relief is all we expect, we may surely, with reason, look for some advantage from a little variety in our applications.

Dry powders, by preventing evaporation from the surface of the sore, have been much recommended by some; but I should imagine the use of saturnine lotions, particularly when the surface is protected by being previously smeared with a simple unguent, or simply the use of the saturnine ointment, may, from the well-known sedative effects of lead, be deserving of more frequent trial than it usually obtains.

As to the treatment of the disease completely within the body, as when affecting some important internal organ, surgical medicine would, with

propriety, enjoin antiphlogistic means and the use of narcotics.

At times, even where the disease has been fairly removed, a recurrence sometimes happens, and the efforts of the surgeon, on such occasions, are sometimes crowned with success by a second operation; and a case lately occurred in the Hospital of this place, where a foul sloughing sore succeeding after the extirpation of a breast, was made to granulate, by powdering the part at two or three successive dressings with the red oxide of mercury, the more prominent renewed diseased parts, however, having been previously removed by the knife. A similar case also, which, indeed, suggested the practice in the above instance, occurred to Chesselden,* where also may be seen his opinions as to the use of mercury in this disease, *after* operation. Another † of the same sort is also on record, suggested in the same way by that of Chesselden.

In the present state of Surgery, no one can doubt the propriety of strictly attending to the state of the patient's general health after an operation, when we find how constantly more

* Chesselden, p. 140, 141.

† Howard, p. 101.

ordinary complaints are under its influence ;* and even where we wish merely to keep an individual in a tolerable state of tranquillity, where the removal of the disease may be impracticable, to assist the slow state of bowels, frequently attendant on cancerous patients, is much to be recommended.

Many experienced practitioners are of opinion, that a Cancer should scarcely ever be removed ; and the first Dr. Alexander Monro has left on record the following extraordinary statement, that out of about 60 Cancers operated upon, only 4 remained free of the disease for two years.† Now, though Dr. Monro has not left us the particulars of each case, and we know the disease is more apt to recur in some situations than others ; yet if it is not overrated, which we cannot well, in justice, suppose, there is here a most unlooked for unfavourable majority, and very much in opposition to the practice which we every day see pursued by the best of modern Surgeons.

There is also some difference of opinion as to the propriety or impropriety of performing the

* Abernethy on the Constitutional Origin of Local Diseases, and in his Works ubique.

† This is to be found at the end of Mr. Howard's work on Cancer, and referred from the Edin. Med. Essays.

operation at an early or late period. It is generally thought that this ought not to be done after the disease has existed for a certain time : on the other hand, it has been said, that when an ulcerating Cancer is wasting the patient, it is a means of prolonging life. Some have said when a relapse does take place, the disease comes back with greater violence : others, when a hardening in the lips of the cicatrix succeeds, that the disease is more mild ; that the patient has a good compensation for the pain of the operation in being relieved, for a time, of a disease more quickly than could be done by the ordinary ulcerative process of nature.

It has been said also, that * “ if the removal
 “ of the morbid part were equally complete in
 “ two patients, one of whom had been afflicted
 “ seven months, and the other seven years, with
 “ a Cancer, I should esteem the latter patient
 “ in less danger of a relapse than the former.”
 And the reason assigned for this, what may appear an extraordinary opinion, is simple enough, viz. the different state of progress the disease may be in, in different parts of a gland, from which some, soon to become diseased, may be •

* Pearson, p. 32. See also p. 50.

left unnoticed in the operation ; whereas, when the disease is a little farther advanced, and has not increased much for some time, its boundaries become more defined, and we are to suppose it less likely to extend.

Whilst on the subject of the treatment, it is scarcely necessary to mention that different remedies inactive in diseases truly cancerous, as iron, hemlock, nightshade, anticancerous elixirs, * and various other, as well as empirical medicines, have been frequently in repute as specific in Cancer, with such unmerited credit, as they were likely to receive from the ignorant, or might be assigned them by those who felt it their interest to impose.

Simple pressure has also been proposed as a remedy in Cancer. †

AMONG the diseases which we might be apt to confound with Cancer, are some of those in Mr. Abernethy's classification, as the mammary sarcoma, the tuberculated sarcoma, the pancrea-

* Essay on Cancer by J. Burrows, p. 74.

† Minutes of Cancer by Samuel Young. London, 1816.

tic sarcoma, or, perhaps, some of the less violent cases of spongoid inflammation. But, however agreeable and satisfactory these distinctions may be to the curious in these matters, or however to be desired as tending to complete our surgical nosology, yet in the treatment of incurable local disorder, and those coming under the epithet malignant, this signifies the less: for whether these are in reality of a very distinct nature or not,* and a future period of advance in Surgery may have a general character assigned them, which will be found common to and connecting them all, the general treatment of most of them agrees, in so many particulars, as to make little

* Mr. Home's case, at p. 162, 163, seems to be one in which a tumour, partaking evidently in some degree of a Scirrhus structure, had been passing into one of these probably of Mr. Abernethy's classification: There may be also occasionally observed co-existing Scirrhus and tuberculated appearances. (Baillie, 365.) This, together with a belief that, in these malignant disorders, distinctions taken from anatomical structure, beyond the striking one of Scirrhus, are really endless, leads to the conclusion, that we ought, at least, to proceed with caution in forming new species: Still it is true, though we cannot always distinguish before operating, these investigations may sometimes lead us from after inspection of the tumour, to form some opinion as to the likelihood or unlikelihood of a return of the complaint.

difference in practice, or the judgment we are to form of them. Of the fungus hæmatodes, indeed, at present it may be observed, that we would sometimes be disposed to leave the disease to itself, when, were it ordinary Cancer, we might be induced to attempt the extirpation of the tumour; but in this instance the striking peculiarities of the disease suggest at once some little variety in the mode of treatment.

The fact, that cancerous diseases have many of their symptoms or appearances in common with other ordinary complaints, and the unlooked-for cures in diseases seemingly cancerous which have occasionally taken place,* fully justify the opinion of some, that we have no way of pronouncing at first, with perfect confidence, on a disease being certainly cancerous; but surely, without advancing the argument of the *tactus eruditus*, a disease of this nature may in general be ascertained with tolerable certainty, by temporizing for a little, and in some instances, as in those of suspected venereal or pseudo-syphillitic origin, we have it always in our power to decide, by delaying until the disease shall show itself.

In what has been usually called Scirrhus of the

* Lambe's Reports, p. 165; Howard, p. 49.

liver, there is something peculiar ; for it is generally supposed that mercury does not agree in the cancerous constitution, and in very few instances does it agree in the scrophulous, yet it is frequently, though by no means always, found useful in this state of the liver,* as well as in a peculiar sarcomatous enlargement of the testicle, complicated with hydrocile, different, of course, in this last case from the real Cancer of this part.

The prostate exhibits very distinct states of disease, being sometimes affected with mere scrophula, and at others showing in its structure all the characters of the common appearance of Scirrhus in other parts of the body.†

The *noli me tangere* has been accounted nearly connected with Cancer, but seems to differ from it in some particulars. To this class, perhaps, belongs that particular disease produced by the irritation of soot, and rather confined to Bri-

* It is now pretty generally understood, that what has been called Scirrhus of the liver is not really so, and is, in fact, some other disease,—*common tubercle of the liver*. See Baillie, p. 216.

† Baillie, p. 327, 328. In the Note, however, at p. 330, he has mentioned this particular condition of the prostate, viz. its little tendency to run into the state of ulceration when it is really of a Scirrhus nature.

tain, called Chimney-Sweeper's Cancer, or Soot Wart.*

It may occasionally be a matter of some importance to the accuracy of our diagnostic marks, to recollect how much more frequently Cancer affects the under than the upper lip: the unequivocal instances of the disease found in the latter being very few, whereas daily experience demonstrates the frequent existence of these affections in the under lip.

Before concluding, two additional particulars connected with the subject may, perhaps, be here introduced, without infringing much on propriety of arrangement.

One of these is a slight difference in the size of the two mammæ in the healthy state, which I think I have now in several instances observed, with this singularity, that the gland on the left side in all the instances to which I allude is the larger. Whether this is from the heart within producing a sort of irritation analogous to that of a foreign body, or something of this sort, and favouring in this way an increased action in the vessels of the part, or whether, indeed, the supposed circumstance shall be confirmed at all by

* Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales, p. 584.

the future observation of others, remains to be determined.

The other is a beating* within the abdomen in the lumbar region, which takes place in some instances in Cancer, or similar disease of the testicle. This, in a case which lately occurred, was pronounced not in a decided manner, but in a

* This, however, when it does occur, is by no means offered as a symptom which may never lead to error in judging of the existence of Cancer of the testicle. Pulsatory swellings, independent of aneurismal ones, and those containing a fluid, to which pulsation is communicated from proximity to a large artery, &c., have been seen occupying other parts of the body, and proceeding from what we should be disposed, for want of other words, to call nervous irritation. Case.—A pulsating tumour, the motions of which could be seen at some little distance, was seated about the nape of the neck, accompanied by great pain in the head: For these symptoms different measures were employed: Amongst others, the occipital artery was more than once opened, but without benefit. The individual died, and, on inspection of the parts after death, all the arteries seemed sound: Nothing at first could be discovered at all capable of accounting for the symptoms, till, on turning up the edge of the tentorium, Mr. George Bell, to whom I am indebted for this case, cut his finger severely on something, which was discovered to be a long spicula of bone, running in upon the soft parts. Were it necessary, I could add another case, with exactly similar symptoms, produced by a similar cause.

cursory way, by a practitioner who has seen a great deal of Surgical disease, to be probably owing to the existence of aneurism about the bifurcation of the aorta ; and by another of very extensive information, to be occasioned by an accidental collection of air and feculent matter in the great intestines. But on mentioning the circumstance to Professor Thomson, it appeared he had either seen, or, at least, several cases of the sort had come to his knowledge, and he explained the real nature of the disease, by attributing this singular symptom to the enlargement of the glands within.

The testicle was removed in the above instance, and the wound cicatrized very kindly ; but the case, as might be expected from the above view, ended fatally. I had purposed in this instance opening the body, with the intention of satisfying myself as to the above explanation, and adding another case to Professor Thomson's list of this curious accompanying circumstance of the disease, but was prevented by the individual's being at some distance when his death took place, and my not having heard of it till too long a period had elapsed for the intended examination.

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